

March 17, 2016

To the Members of the State Water Resources Control Board:

As a landowner in the Sacramento Valley in Northern California, I am writing today to urge the State Water Resources Control Board and other concerned agencies to begin to work together immediately in order to maximize water supplies available for all CVP authorized purposes, including fish and wildlife, waterfowl, agricultural, municipal and industrial and power generation purposes.

The Sacramento River Settlement Contractors (SRSC) are the most senior water rights holders on the Sacramento River. *It is imperative that the SWRCB NOT implement the new proposal to alter the established schedule of releasing water from Shasta Reservoir.* Because Shasta Reservoir is the largest storage facility in the CVP, the proposal to delay SRSC water diversions by more than a month or longer violates senior water rights under which Settlement Contracts are entitled to divert water.

As we have done before, landowners and farmers like myself are ready to take actions voluntarily to help conserve storage in Shasta, but holding off diversions until late May or early June **would decimate agriculture and related economies in the Sacramento Valley.** It would prevent me from planting a crop this year and in future years, and thus cause significant hardship to my operation, my family, and the regional economy. **It would also affect other beneficial environmental activities and severely impact other species.**

Today, Shasta Reservoir has more than 3,000,000 acre-feet in storage; with the March storms, Shasta storage will likely approach the 4,000,000 acre-feet mark by early April. We all agree that the winter-run Chinook salmon must be protected. **I urge you to take any and all necessary steps, however, to work with the Bureau of Reclamation and others to develop a CVP operations plan for all of the diverse needs that depend on water from the CVP. It is imperative that you do so now and not wait until April or May.**

My family has built our own farming operation based on the established practice of diverting water in the spring. **The new proposal to begin diversions in May or June would destroy my ability to plant rice on my family's farm as we have done for three generations.** We have grown a variety of crops on more than 500 acres since the 1930s, including legumes, wheat, vetch, and safflower. But the ground is most suitable for rice and we have developed a robust program that has included both organic and conventional varieties. Our current focus on Calrose medium grain rice contributes to our region's production of arguably the highest quality of rice on the world market today. The rice stubble that remains after harvest in the fall feeds the abundant waterfowl that stop on our farm during their winter migration each year. I have worked with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to develop a top-notch waterfowl program that hosts an astonishing variety of bird species. But all of these practices will be destroyed if your board delays water diversions until May or June, for that late date would make it impossible to us to grow an adequate or quality rice crop. We could no longer plant the one crop that flourishes on the kind of ground we have.

My family farm has been in production for more than 75 years and your actions could change the future landscape of my farm and the Sacramento Valley. Thus I strongly urge you to evaluate this dire impact as you deliberate on the important issue of the timing of water diversions.

Sincerely,



Lenore Kitts, Ph.D.